



Catholic Faith, Life & Creed

A Complete Catechesis for Christian Living

Breaking Open the Word
Mary Birmingham

Dedication of the Lateran Basilica



Basilica of John Lateran, Cathedral of the Bishop of Rome, Italy



Begin with the Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Opening Prayer

Option 1. Use Opening Prayer from the Sunday Liturgy.

Option 2.

Prayer of Pope Clement XI

Lord, I believe in you: increase my faith.

I trust in you: strengthen my trust.

I love you: let me love you more and more.

I am sorry for my sins: deepen my sorrow.

I worship you as my first beginning.

I long for you as my last end.

I praise you as my constant helper.

And I call you as my loving protector.

I want to do what you ask of me:

In the way you ask, for as long as you ask, because you ask it.

Let me love you Lord as my God.

And see myself as I really am: a pilgrim in this world.

*A Christian called to respect and love
all those lives I touch.*

Catholic
**Faith, Life
& Creed**
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Doctrinal Sessions.

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Liturgical Context

- ▶ Today's feast is a feast that occurs every year in the sanctoral calendar on November 9.
- ▶ The sanctoral calendar is a liturgical calendar that establishes which day is set aside to honor a specific saint or feast.
- ▶ These feast days are celebrated on days throughout the year (January through December).
- ▶ Each day in the sanctoral calendar is devoted to a saint or a feast of some sort.
- ▶ The feast we celebrate today is called the Dedication of the Basilica of John Lateran. The feast always occurs on November 9th and thus when it falls on a Sunday, since it is a solemnity of the church—a feast of great importance, it takes precedence over the regular Sunday liturgy that would normally be celebrated (i.e. Thirty Second Sunday in Ordinary Time).
- ▶ In other words, if we were not celebrating this feast we would be celebrating the Thirty Second Sunday in Ordinary Time—which means we would be getting very close to the end of this year's liturgical cycle. We have been hearing from the Gospel of Matthew all year (Cycle A readings). The next cycle we will hear from the Gospel of Mark in (Cycle B).
- ▶ The Basilica of St. John Lateran is the cathedral of the diocese of Rome and the Pope is its bishop.
- ▶ The word Lateran comes from the reign of the Laterani family.
- ▶ When Constantine signed the Edict of Milan making Christianity not only legal, but the state religion, persecution of Christians came to an end.
- ▶ New churches were erected and old ones were remodeled.
- ▶ Emperor Constantine gifted the Church of Rome with the Lateran palace and surrounding environs.
- ▶ He built a church on the premises in 324.
- ▶ The new church was dedicated to the Holy Redeemer by Pope Sylvester on November 9 on a place that used to house the royal guard.
- ▶ The church was damaged by earthquakes in the fourth and tenth centuries but was rebuilt by Sergius III (904-911).
- ▶ Since the twelve century the second titular patron of the basilica was St. John the Baptist. Later, St. John the Evangelist was also associated with the basilica. This is why it is referred to as St. John Lateran.
- ▶ The bishop of Rome lived in the palace until 1304 when Benedict XI was forced to leave the city in the midst of political turmoil. For the next forty-three years the bishops of Rome resided in Avignon while the Lateran palace sat empty.
- ▶ Nicholas V (1447-1455) moved the offices of the Church to the Vatican but the Basilica has always been the cathedral of the bishop of Rome (the Pope).
- ▶ The basilica of the Lateran was damaged by fire in 1308 and again in 1361.
- ▶ Pope Benedict XIII consecrated it in 1726. It has since been under constant reconstruction and renovation.
- ▶ Clement XII (1730-1740) had an inscription placed on the basilica: this church is "Mother and Head of all the churches of the City and the world".

- ▶ Augustinian monks promoted an annual commemoration of the dedication of the Basilica that continues today.
- ▶ This feast is important as it is the cathedral of the universal church—a sign that we are all gathered together as one in Christ. It is a symbol of the Church’s unity.
- ▶ Today’s feast celebrates the Church that Jesus called into being—the unity of the Church gathered under its head, Peter and his successors.

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in groups of two, and then surface insights in the wider group.

- ▶ What spoke to your heart in today’s liturgy?
- ▶ What reading, symbol, music, homily, spoke to you and why did it speak to you?

First Reading: Ezekiel 47:1-2, 8-9, 12

If time is a consideration, omit reflection on one or both of the readings; simply make a statement about the reading such as:

- ▶ Church/Temple images are resplendent in the readings for today’s solemnity honoring the dedication of the Basilica of John Lateran.
- ▶ The water flowing from the Temple is a sign of abundance and grace; it is a sign of paradise.
- ▶ Water itself is a sign of God’s presence and great blessing.
- ▶ Ezekiel’s image heralds the transformation and conversion of the exiles and restoration of Israel.
- ▶ The exile was understood as God’s punishment for the sin and apostasy of the people of Israel.
- ▶ The pattern was repeated over and over again. The people sinned; God punished them for their sinfulness; the people repented and God forgave and restored them to new life and to the covenant they shared.
- ▶ Water emptying into the polluted waters of the sea in verse eight evokes the image of the Dead Sea—a place void of all life—a place where nothing can live.
- ▶ The water flowing from the Temple is an image of hope and life in direct contrast with the metaphor of lifelessness and death in the Dead Sea reference.
- ▶ Ezekiel offers hope in the face of hopelessness.



Mystagogy reflection on the mysteries

Catechist invites participants to respond to one or more of the following questions in groups of two, and then surface brief insights in the wider group. If time allows, catechist shares from his or her own life experience.

- ▶ What is the Good News for us today in this reading?
- ▶ What is the primary message in this reading from Ezekiel?

- ▶ Where in our world is there hopelessness? How is Ezekiel's message a word of hope for them?
- ▶ What is going on in your life right now that needs the life-giving waters of refreshment and renewal to restore your soul?
- ▶ Do you believe God punishes sinners by sending an entire nation into exile? In what way has our understanding of God changed (or developed) since the time of Ezekiel? What is your image of God?

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 3:9c-11, 16-17

If time is a consideration, omit reflection on one or both of the readings; simply make a statement about the reading such as:

- ▶ **Paul addresses the divisiveness in his community.**
- ▶ Paul is addressing dissension and divisiveness in the Corinthian community.
- ▶ For Paul it is a sign that their spiritual growth was immature and had stagnated.
- ▶ They fail to see their own shortcomings.
- ▶ They judge by human standards not by God's wisdom.
- ▶ Paul insists that even though there is division in the community, each person is responsible for his or her own actions. Each person will be held accountable for the way in which he or she served (or did not serve) God and the community.
- ▶ Paul exudes hope that all will be saved; he affirms the holiness of God's people—we belong to God. He believes in the holiness of the community in spite of its sinfulness.
- ▶ God can and will redirect his people and thus Paul is confident in their salvation.
- ▶ It is God who leads the community—not human beings.
- ▶ Human beings are sinners; but Christ has already paid the price. He is the foundation upon which the Church must rely.
- ▶ We therefore are to live life in the shadow of Christ and do the work we are called to do, trusting that God's work will be accomplished.
- ▶ We must guard against self-aggrandizement or belief that we are spiritually superior to others. If we are unconcerned about our life in Christ—our own call to holiness—and peace and unity within our community of believers, then we are deceiving ourselves and will be held accountable for that deception.



Mystagogy reflection on the mysteries

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in groups of two and then surface brief insights in the wider group. If time allows, catechist shares from his or her own life experience.

- ▶ What is the Good News in this reading?
- ▶ What is the message for you in this reading?

- ▶ Do you see your spiritual life growing in Christ or stagnating?
- ▶ What evidence is there in your life that your spiritual life is developing (or not)?
- ▶ What does it mean to you to be holy? Are you holy? How would you define holiness?

Gospel; John 2:13-22

Read or summarize the Gospel, perhaps provide a copy of the text for further reflection.

Gospel Exegesis

(Please note: catechist may intersperse the questions at the end of the exegesis throughout your presentation where appropriate.)

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions before presenting the exegesis.

- ▶ What specifically touched you in this Gospel?
- ▶ What does this Gospel mean to you?

INTERPRETATION OF THE GOSPEL

- ▶ It is important to note that all four Gospels relate this story of Jesus driving out the money changers of the Temple precincts. When that happens it is a sure sign that the event took place as the evangelist remembered it and that it is considered a pivotal event.
- ▶ John's community considers the story from the perspective of living their Christian faith for sixty years since the event took place.
- ▶ Jesus inaugurates a new worship for the people.
- ▶ Prophets insisted that the one offering the sacrifice must be humble, pure, righteous and holy before God. Those same prophets chastised Temple sacrifices claiming that the priests did not possess the requisite righteous qualities.
- ▶ Jesus, however, is considered the epitome of righteousness and holiness before God; to honor God is synonymous with honoring Jesus according to the Johannine perspective.
- ▶ Thus, Jewish worship must now be superseded by worship of Jesus, the Christ.
- ▶ Jesus cleanses the Temple. He drives out the old worship; he stands in its place as the new center of worship.
- ▶ Jesus' action was not simply metaphoric or symbolic it was quite practical. Sacrifice could no longer be preformed if the means of securing the animal to be sacrificed was removed. The theology of animal sacrifice underpins the Christian need to replace it.
- ▶ Animal sacrifice was done in ritual as atonement for sin. The animal was sacrificed in place of the sinner.
- ▶ Jesus effectively replaces Jewish sacrificial sin offerings because he became that sacrificial offering when he died on the cross. Jesus was the sacrifice. Jesus stood in the place of sinful humanity.
- ▶ Jesus replaced the need for the Temple and by extension so did the Church.
- ▶ Jesus thus became the new worship.
- ▶ In John's Gospel, Jesus is the divine man, the holy man; worship exists in him. Honoring Jesus is synonymous with honoring God. The invitation is to forego

Jewish worship and place one's new worship in the person of Jesus. Jesus cleanses the Temple and drives out the money changers; he dismisses the old worship and signals the new.

- ▶ Christian sacrifice is spiritual; it is the offer of one's heart and soul. Animal and cereal offerings were no longer needed.
- ▶ The people (particularly sixty years later in John's cultural milieu) wanted signs from God. Nicodemus believed that if only there could be a miracle everyone would believe.
- ▶ For Jesus the only sign that mattered was the sign of his resurrection.
- ▶ In addition to the new worship Jesus was inaugurating, worship rooted in him, he is also furious that his house had become a market place of commerce that had erected barriers to free and total access to God.
- ▶ The rich lorded their wealth over poor people by paying their Temple tax with an ostentatious display of their wealth—an oxen or other large animal. The poor could only afford a small dove or pigeon—which for them was a great sacrifice—in order to comply with the law. Jesus' action was also a commentary on the barriers that kept poor people and others from access to the Temple.



Mystagogy

reflection on the mysteries

Catechist invites participants to respond to ONE or MORE appropriate questions (as time allows) in small groups of four. Use the last three or four minutes to surface their insights in the wider group. Catechist responds by sharing his or her own experience. See appendix for an example. (@ Ten-twelve minutes)

- ▶ What is the Good News in the Gospel?
- ▶ What is the primary lesson that we are to glean from this Gospel?
- ▶ What are the primary themes?
- ▶ In what way, if any does what happened in the Temple with the money changers reflect what we see in some churches today? What is the challenge inherent in this Gospel?
- ▶ Do we place our trust in Jesus or the externals of worship—such as all the “churchy” things we do?
- ▶ Why do we no longer need animal sacrifice?
- ▶ What is Jesus saying to you as a believer in this Gospel?
- ▶ In what way do you honor Jesus? How would you describe your devotion to Jesus? Who is Jesus to and for you?
- ▶ What do we as a church community need to learn from today's Gospel?
- ▶ Why is it so difficult to imagine the Christ who lost his temper in today's story?
- ▶ Imagine how difficult it must have been for early Jewish followers to leave what they knew of Jewish worship for the new worship of this holy man. Put yourself in their shoes...what would compel you---what compels you today—to put your trust in such a person?

- ▶ People in Jesus' time asked for signs. In what way do we do the same thing today? What signs have you asked for?

Catechist invites participants to reflect on the following question in the group or in their journal.

- ▶ After reflection on today's liturgy, what one thing is God asking of you at this time in your life?
- ▶ What obstacles stand in the way of following God's call?

CONCLUDING PRAYER

THE PRAYER, O LORD MY GOD

(By Saint Anselm.)

O Lord my God.

*Teach my heart this day
where and how to find you.*

*You have made me and re-made me,
and you have bestowed on me
all the good things I possess,
and still I do not know you.
I have not yet done
that for which I was made.*

*Teach me to seek you,
for I cannot seek you
unless you teach me,
or find you
unless you show yourself to me.*

*Let me seek you in my desire;
let me desire you in my seeking.
Let me find you by loving you;
let me love you when I find you.*

OR

Minor rite: Blessing: 95-97.

APPENDIX

► What do we, as Church, need to learn from today's Gospel?

It is very easy to be an armchair quarterback and critique the institutional church for its shortcomings. Yes, we are to challenge the Church much like Saint James teaches us to do when it comes to institutional sin such as the recent scandals. But as Jesus tells us, let us not look at the speck in another's eye until we examine the log in our own.

The Church does need to be attentive to practices that erect barriers for people to come into intimate communion with God such as the oppressive laws observed in the Gospel that posed a hardship on poor people when it came to Temple worship. Yet, we must ask ourselves; do we erect similar barriers in our own parishes? Who is not welcomed at our Eucharistic feast? Are there people on the margins who never are included?

The primary message in today's Gospel is to have faith *in Jesus*—not obsessive externals of our faith. If the externals become more important than our intimate union with Christ then our lives are out of balance.

A man I knew went to Mass every day. He boasted of his daily attendance. To those with whom he had contact he was very often rude, judgmental, and prejudiced. One day when we were speaking about the plight of the poor immigrants that had just arrived in our city he said they should all be put on a boat and set adrift in the ocean. There was no tease in his eye or laughter in his voice; it was not a joke. He meant it.

It is easy to get caught up in “doing” church and never “being” church. Jesus calls us to become like him—to become church—the living sacrament of his love. It is an easy trap to think I am doing all the right things and miss the point altogether. When things don't go my way or God has not answered a specific prayer I sometimes boast to him of my great Catholic deeds as though I am more entitled than others to get my desired outcome. Today's Gospel is a wakeup call. It calls me to focus my attention on Christ—the only Source of my inmost desires. He will use whatever it takes to drive out the distractions of our lives if only we would yield to his invitation. Today's Gospel is a catechism on what it means to be the CHURCH he calls us to become.



Connecting Liturgy with Catholic Doctrine

Possible doctrinal themes that flow from this week's
Liturgy of the Word and Eucharist

Possible doctrinal themes that flow from the celebration of the liturgy:

Church

Church Structure

Holy Orders

Jesus Christ

Catholic Social Teaching

Liturgical Year

Eucharist Series

Other themes may be chosen as well--choose from the scope and sequence chart and create your own connecting statement. The following statements make the appropriate connections between the doctrinal issue you have chosen and the liturgy of the day.

CHURCH

On this feast that honors the dedication of the Basilica of the Bishop of Rome—the Pope, it is a perfect occasion to reflect upon what we mean by Church—how the Church understands itself. It is thus appropriate that today we focus our attention on the CHURCH.

CHURCH STRUCTURE

On this feast that honors the dedication of the Basilica of the Bishop of Rome—the Pope, it is a perfect occasion to reflect upon the structure of the Church—how it is organized and how it functions. It is thus appropriate that today we focus our attention on CHURCH STRUCTURE.

HOLY ORDERS

On this feast that honors the dedication of the Basilica of the Bishop of Rome—the Pope, it is a perfect occasion to reflect upon the sacrament of Holy Orders—the sacrament that ordains priests for the priesthood and leadership of the Church that continues today in Jesus' absence. It is thus appropriate that today we focus our attention on the sacrament of HOLY ORDERS.

JESUS CHRIST

Today's Gospel reminds us that we are to focus our attention on Jesus and not the externals of our faith. It is thus appropriate that today we focus our attention on the person of Jesus—who he is and how we understand him—let us continue with a session on JESUS CHRIST.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Today's Gospel is a reminder of how Jesus felt toward the oppression of the poor in his midst. The rich lorded their wealth over poor people by paying their Temple tax with an ostentatious display of their wealth. Poor people sacrificed greatly to present their mere pigeon or turtledove to meet their obligations of Law. Jesus' action was also a commentary on the barriers that kept poor people and others from access to the Temple. It is thus most appropriate that we focus our attention on CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING.

LITURGICAL YEAR

Any Sunday of the year is an appropriate time to reflect on the cycle of the Church year. Every Sunday is a most appropriate time to address what we celebrate in the unfolding liturgical cycle. The entire mystery of Christ from his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension to the Father and the sending of the Holy Spirit is manifested in one complete liturgical year. It is thus most appropriate that we address what the Church teaches about the LITURGICAL YEAR.

EUCCHARIST SERIES:

Our premier celebration of the Paschal Mystery—the life, passion, death, resurrection, ascension sending of the Spirit is made manifest and re-presented for us in the Eucharistic liturgy. Thus any Sunday would be an appropriate time to focus our attention on the Eucharistic liturgy. Today we will focus on part ____ of the Eucharistic Series.

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